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ABSTRACT

A study was done at the University of Colorado to determine the qualifications, priorities, behaviors, and authority base of effective curriculum directors in six Colorado school districts. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative data were obtained by observing and interviewing the curriculum directors and by collecting curriculum documents; the quantitative research was done through questionnaires completed by curriculum directors, personnel with curriculum-related tasks, and other educators. The combined data obtained in the study generally revealed that effective curriculum directors had a doctorate and a theoretical background in curriculum development; the authority base, whether staff or line, was unimportant; the curriculum directors developed the human element of the organization; they spent most of their time working on curriculum tasks; they assessed the needs and beliefs of the district and evaluated the curriculum's success; they emphasized effective communication and the change process; selecting and acquiring instructional tools was a priority; and, lastly, the effective curriculum directors generally exercised persuasion and influence instead of power. The document includes a list of references. (RG)

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THE CURRICULUM DIRECTOR: POWER VS. PERSUASION

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THE CURRICULUM DIRECTOR: POWER vs. PERSUASION

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The curriculum director position of a school district has been a subject of much debate for over 30 years. From the New Jersey study in the 1950's (Doll, et al, 1958), theorists, ranging from doctoral students to the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, blue-ribbon committees, have struggled with describing the duties associated with the position. Because of recent demands for increased excellence in education by numerous commissions and political groups, the effectiveness of the curriculum director has become of ever increasing interest. There is a need to study effective directors to determine what are their successful practices.

The Effective Curriculum Director

A study done at the University of Colorado investigated the following problem, "What are the leader behaviors and task priorities, as perceived by central office administrators, principals, and teachers, of Colorado curriculum directors from mid-sized school districts who have been sesignated as effective by a panel of knowledgeable Colorado educators?" Sub-problems of the study were:

1. What personal qualifications are most common with the curriculum directors designated as effective?
2. Do the perceptions of central office administrators, principals, and teachers differ concerning which are the high priority task responsibilities for effective curriculum directors?
3. Do the perceptions of central office administrators, principals, and teachers differ concerning which are the leader behaviors

exhibited by the effective curriculum directors?

4. What is the authority base most common with effective curriculum directors, line or staff?

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The director of curriculum was identified as a staff officer who works with administrative officials in the planning and development of the education program of the school and directs the activities of supervisors or coordinators of instruction, teachers, and lay citizens in planning curriculum and introducing the plans into the school district. The effective curriculum director was defined as a curriculum director selected from a list of Colorado curriculum directors who, from past performance, were identified as being effective by a panel of knowledgeable educators in Colorado.

The study was delimited in a number of ways. The job analysis was concerned with curriculum generalists within particular school districts. Only mid-sized, Colorado school districts were used. The study was concerned only with the analysis of the role of the curriculum director for behaviors that had actually occurred.

Because of the delimitations of the study, it was not directly generalized to other states and school districts of different sizes. The study was confined to the perceptions of the curriculum director's role performance and leader behaviors.

Since a clear consensus of the duties and responsibilities of the curriculum director seemed to be lacking in the field of education, it was believed that this was an important area for research.

Methodology of the Study

The researcher in this investigation studied the effective curriculum directors in the field by exploring their task responsibility priorities and leader behaviors with the reference groups within several school settings. This was an exploratory study in that it sought what is, rather than to predict relations to be determined. The approach of the study was to combine qualitative and quantitative methods of data gathering. Quantitative procedures were used to assess leader behaviors and task priorities of the effective curriculum directors as perceived by different reference groups. Qualitative procedures were then used to validate the survey results by observation, interview, and document collection.

Selection Procedure

The researcher recruited a panel of knowledgeable expert educators from the State of Colorado who nominated successful and effective curriculum directors. The characteristics of the panel members included the following:

1. The panel members had curriculum development expertise.
2. The panel members were knowledgeable about curriculum administrators from throughout the State of Colorado.
3. The panel members represented university educators, school administrators, and teachers.
4. The panel members were able to render a decision concerning the effectiveness of the curriculum administrators.

The recommendations of the panel members were based on their interactions with school districts from throughout the State of Colorado. The panel members' criteria for selecting successful and effective curriculum directors included:

1. The nominee was employed in the same district for the previous calendar year.
2. The nominee was a curriculum generalist within the school district, with responsibility for directing curriculum development for groups of specific grades or all grade levels in the school district.
3. The nominee was employed with the primary responsibility of curriculum development.
4. Curriculum development was a district-wide responsibility, rather than based in each separate building.
5. The nominee was known to be successful and effective in the performance of his/her responsibilities.
6. The nominee was judged to be effective by the selecting panel members.

Each panel member was asked to rank his top eight nominees. The researcher then ranked the combined results of the panel nominees. Selections were made based on the rankings of the panel members. A final ranking of nominees was made to determine the top choices to be used in this study. Ethical consideration required that the selected, effective curriculum directors and their districts remain anonymous in an effort to protect the confidentiality of the people involved in the study.

Telephone contact was made with each curriculum director, starting with the first rated individual, then proceeding through the sixth ranked nominee. The researcher telephoned the selected nominees to request an appointment to discuss this research project and their possible involvement.

The initial interview covered the background of the study and the

requirements of the study for the district. Those requirements included: observation of the curriculum directors in the conduct of their responsibilities, accessibility of district principals and teachers, interview time with the superintendent and all district curriculum workers, as well as the availability of curriculum related documents.

An attempt was made in the initial interview to state the expectations of the study, establish role patterns, and create an atmosphere of open and honest dialogue concerning the functions and behaviors of effective curriculum directors. A total of 54 interviews and 18 observations of more than two hours each were made.

Research Procedures

This study assessed the leader behaviors and task responsibility priority of the effective curriculum directors in six school districts using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. To collect the qualitative data for the study of the effective curriculum directors, the researcher used the following procedures:

1. Questionnaires were completed by the effective curriculum directors. This served as a baseline data for comparison with the other reference groups from that district.
2. Questionnaires were completed by colleagues from the school district office who had curriculum related responsibilities. The effective curriculum directors were asked to nominate those colleagues from the school district office who were able to render a knowledgeable judgement concerning the questions asked in the survey instrument.
3. Questionnaires were completed by the school district principals.
4. Questionnaires were completed by the teachers who were familiar

with behaviors and functions of the effective curriculum director. The effective curriculum directors were asked to nominate teachers who were able to render a knowledgeable judgement concerning the questions asked in the survey instrument.

5. All questionnaires were sent with a cover letter naming the candidate under study and explaining the purpose of the project.

To collect the qualitative data for this study, the researcher used the following procedures:

1. The effective curriculum director was observed in the conduct of his/her responsibilities. A minimum of three observations, each lasting approximately two hours, were conducted for each effective curriculum director under study.
2. Interviews were conducted with the school district superintendent or his/her designee and with school district office colleagues, concerning the effective curriculum director's leader behaviors and the priorities given to the various tasks used to develop curriculum.
3. Three interviews were conducted with the effective curriculum director. These interviews were classified as: (a) initial interview; (b) formal interview; and (c) debriefing.

The interview schedule was carefully planned to obtain data that would provide background information and direct answers for the stated research problem. The interviewer reviewed the interview techniques described in the literature to help eliminate bias and increase the validity of the collected data.

After the initial interview, the formal interview with the effective curriculum director was conducted. This was a structured

interview using open-ended questions concerning the leader behavior and the priorities given to tasks used to develop curriculum. This interview was tape-recorded to allow the researcher the opportunity to retrieve word-for-word data concerning the questions asked. The tape-recorded interview was transcribed word-for-word along with handwritten notes explaining dates, times, and locations.

The debriefing meeting with the effective curriculum directors reviewed the data collected from the prior interviews, observations, and the data collected from the quantitative research. Cross evaluation of the data occurred by seeking clarification from the effective curriculum directors concerning any ambiguous information gathered from the observations and interviews. Revisions of interview data were made by suggestions from the curriculum directors under study.

4. Curriculum documents on file in each district were reviewed for pertinent data.

Instruments Used in the Study

Leader Behavior Descriptions Questionnaire - Form XII (LBDQ Form XII) has been widely used to measure leadership behaviors. Here, the instrument was used to determine the leadership behaviors exhibited by the leader as reported by the personnel for whom he leads. The primary author of the instrument, Stogdill (1963), stated, "There are no norms for the LBDQ. The questionnaire was designed for use as a research device. It is not recommended for use in selection, assignment, or assessment purposes" (p. 8). This sought to determine those leadership behaviors that had been exhibited by effective curriculum directors. There was no intention to measure the effectiveness of the incumbent's

leadership abilities; hence, the LBDQ - Form XII was selected to assess the director's leadership behaviors.

The number of returns required to provide a satisfactory index score of leader behaviors was reported in the Manual for the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire - Form XII (1963),

> A minimum of four respondents per leader is desirable and additional respondents beyond 10 do not increase significantly the stability of the index scores. Six or seven respondents per leader would be a good standard. (p. 12) Reference groups with less than four respondents may produce questionable results.

Permission was granted without formal request to use the Leader Behavior Questionnaire for non-profit research projects (Administrative Science Research, the Ohio State University).

Task Responsibility Questionnaire

The second instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher to seek responses concerning the priority given by effective curriculum directors to those tasks required in developing and/or revising the curriculum. The procedure used in developing the list of tasks employed in curriculum development and/or revision by the curriculum director, involved reviewing the recent literature, beginning with the research conducted by Doll, et al. (1958), analyzing the research conducted by ASCD, and the research conducted by Beggs (1972) and Chandler (1981) in their doctoral studies. Tasks commonly given to curriculum directors outside of the realm of curriculum development and/or revision were excluded.

The list developed from the literature review initially yielded 132

statements of tasks performed in curriculum development and/or revision by the curriculum director. The researcher then eliminated duplication and overlap, which resulted in a list of 47 items.

The list of 47 items was submitted to various authorities in the field of curriculum for their analysis. Included in these groups were three university professors, three practicing curriculum administrators, four principals and four teachers familiar with curriculum development procedures. The results indicated the need for the addition of three task statements, plus revision of several statements in the instrument to clarify their meaning.

The 50 question instrument was then field tested with a select group of educational administrators and teachers to determine the completeness and clarity of task statements.

A matrix was developed using "Primary Management Functions" from Hersey and Blanchard (1982) and "Competencies Required of the Curriculum Worker" by Sturges and Kollar (1976). This matrix analyzed the completeness of task statements for both curriculum and management functions.

The face validity of the instrument was established by having three practicing curriculum administrators, not eligible for this study, analyze the instrument for its clarity and completeness of the listed tasks required in curriculum development.

Analysis of the Data

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in collecting the data on the effective curriculum directors. The concept of using varying research methods to gather data was described by Jick (1979) in his description of "Triangulation." He stated,

"organizational researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgements by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon" (p. 602). He further stated,

> Triangulation can capture a more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the unit(s) under study. That is, beyond the analysis of overlapping variance, the use of multiple measures may also uncover some unique variance which otherwise may have been neglected by single methods. (p. 603)

The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data was conducted separately for each effective curriculum director under study and case study analyses of each effective curriculum director were written combining the qualitative and quantitative data to answer the primary research question.

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

The analysis of the qualitative data from the observations, interviews, and the collected documents was conducted in order to develop answers which were independent from the quantitative data for the following research questions:

1. What are the leader behaviors, as perceived by central office personnel, principals, and teachers, of curriculum directors from mid-sized school districts who have been designated as effective by a panel of knowledgeable educators?
2. What are the task responsibility priorities, as perceived by central office personnel, principals and teachers, of curriculum directors from mid-sized school districts who have been designated as effective by a panel of knowledgeable educators.
3. What is the authority base most common with effective curriculum

directors, line or staff?

The prime source of data from the qualitative phase of the study came from the interviews with the effective curriculum directors and their central office colleagues. The procedures used to analyze the data gathered from the interviews included:

1. Creating a master file for each effective curriculum director that contained all field notes, all transcribed notes, and all documents collected.
2. Transcribing all tape recorded interviews from the cassette tapes. Clarification of dates times, locations, and other pertinent information were added by the researcher in the form of handwritten notes.
3. Adding to the master file, the field notes written by the researcher from the interviews with the central office colleagues of the effective curriculum directors.
4. Included in the master file were the field notes written by the researcher from the initial and debriefing interviews with the effective curriculum directors.

The analysis of the qualitative data gathered in each master file, according to Bogdan and Taylor (1975) "refers to a process which entails an effort to formally identify themes and to construct hypotheses (ideas) as they are suggested by data and an attempt to demonstrate support for those themes and hypotheses" (p. 79). Chandler (1981) stated, "In a field study, data collection and analysis take place simultaneously" (p. 51).

Concepts and propositions began to emerge from the naturalistic phase of this study, leading to the identification of significant

themes. The reoccurrence of the various themes from a variety of data sources increased the significance of their emergence. The emerging themes were compared to those presented in the literature in an effort to develop position statements regarding their importance.

The data gathered from the interview questions were condensed in a narrative format to help establish general leader behaviors and task priorities of the effective curriculum directors. The interview schedule response data were supported by the collected documents, through observation of the effective curriculum director in action, and by information obtained in the debriefing interviews.

Analysis of the Quantitative Data

The quantitative data gathered from the Task Priority Questionnaire and from the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire - Form XII were analyzed to develop answers independent from the qualitative data for the same research questions used in the qualitative data analysis.

General Findings

The general findings of the study are based on the leader behaviors and task priorities exhibited by the participants selected for this study only. The findings were organized under the following headings: Personal Characteristics, Authority Position, Leader Behaviors, Task Priority, Curriculum, Evaluation and Assessment, In-Service and Staff Development, Communication, Consideration of Change, and Selection and Acquisition of Instructional Materials.

The general findings of the study corroborated the findings of earlier studies. While no other study has attempted to develop task priorities utilized by effective curriculum directors, primary or

important tasks performed by curriculum directors have been suggested. A comparison of these tasks mentioned in previous research concerning tasks performed by curriculum directors and the findings of this study was conducted. The verification of the findings in this manner gave strong support to the results of the study.

Personal Characteristics Findings

1. The majority of the curriculum directors under study, and designated as effective, were educated at the doctorate level in curriculum, instruction and other related areas of study.
2. They possessed and maintained a strong theoretical background in curriculum development and leadership effectiveness.
3. The length of service in their present positions varied from one and one half years to seven years.
4. The majority of the effective curriculum directors were recruited and employed from districts other than their current employers.
5. There was no relationship between the sex of the candidates and their roles as effective curriculum directors.
6. All were directly responsible for curriculum development for the entire district, with the one exception of a curriculum coordinator who, due to the size of the district, was responsible for curriculum development at the middle school level.
7. The person, to whom the effective curriculum directors were directly responsible, included the Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendents of Instruction and the Executive Director of Middle School Education.

Authority Position Findings

1. The positions, in which the effective curriculum directors were employed, did not indicate a clear preference for either line or

staff authority. Three of the effective curriculum directors were given line authority and three were given staff authority.

2. There was a strong belief on the part of the majority of the effective curriculum directors, that the authority base granted to their positions was insignificant and that they preferred to use the leader behaviors required by staff authority.

Leader Behavior Findings

1. The effective curriculum directors were generally viewed as participative leaders, who worked along side their colleagues.
2. The specific leader behaviors exhibited by the effective curriculum directors were primarily situational. The leader behaviors utilized by the effective curriculum directors varied with the maturity of the group and the specific situation.
3. The effective curriculum directors had a strong people orientation and worked to develop the human side of the organization.
4. The effective curriculum directors supervised curriculum development as a service rather than an administrative function.
5. The curriculum directors, who operated with line authority, had a greater organizational orientation than did the curriculum directors who were given staff responsibility.
6. The effective curriculum directors attempted to develop support for the final curriculum product through group decision-making, delegated responsibility and the opportunity for input from all teachers.
7. The effective curriculum directors were non-directive in specific curricular decisions. They were more directive in the implementation of the curriculum development system.

8. The people orientation of the effective curriculum directors was greater than their task orientation.
9. The effective curriculum directors spoke often of the need to develop a mutual trust and respect level with their colleagues.
10. The most prominently perceived leader behaviors exhibited by the effective curriculum directors, from the normative dimension were persuasiveness, structure, representation and superior orientation; and from the personal dimension were tolerance of freedom and demand reconciliation.
11. The category of production emphasis was generally the lowest rated leader behavior.

Curriculum Development

1. The effective curriculum directors spent a majority of their time in curriculum related tasks.
2. The effective curriculum directors created and implemented systems and procedures for the development of curriculum which were designed to help meet the stated goals and specific needs of the individual school district.
3. The teachers were the main decision makers for the development of goals statements, objectives and curriculum guides.
4. Creating support for the final curriculum product was a priority. It was believed that curriculum developed closest to its point of implementation, would have the greatest chance for success.
5. The chairmanship of the curriculum development committees was generally performed by the effective curriculum director, or an immediate subordinate.
6. Developing scope and sequence in content areas and examining articulation concerns were priorities.

7. The effective curriculum director facilitated and participated in the implementation of the curriculum development system.
8. The development of a useable and relevant curriculum guide, with evaluation and revision after a period of initial implementation, was a priority with the effective curriculum directors.
9. School district support personnel and financial resources were utilized extensively by the effective curriculum directors.
10. The effective curriculum directors coordinated the development of the long range goals for curriculum development in the district.
11. The effective curriculum directors coordinated the work of curriculum committees.
12. The effective curriculum directors kept up to date on curricular trends through attendance at professional meetings, readings and by presenting curriculum related information both in and out of the district.
13. The supervision of the activities of curriculum specialists, coordinators and curriculum workers was a priority of the effective curriculum directors.
14. The effective curriculum directors developed a commitment to and an understanding of curriculum development among the professional staff in the district.

Evaluation and Assessment

1. Assessment of the needs and philosophies of the district was a priority task before curriculum development could occur.
2. The evaluation of the implemented curriculum for relevance and effectiveness was a primary function.
3. The curriculum guide was evaluated for relevance and effectiveness in attaining stated district goals and revised as needed, after the

initial period of implementation.

4. The assessment of learner needs, the development of curriculum objectives to meet these needs, and finally, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the developed curriculum were priorities for the effective curriculum directors.
5. The evaluation of innovations in curriculum and educational technology were priority tasks.
6. The effective curriculum directors established a procedure for the on-going evaluation of the curriculum program in the district as well as developing a system for the evaluation proposed changes in the curriculum.

In-service and Staff Development

1. Curriculum development and staff development were believed to be interrelated.
2. The in-servicing of the newly developed curriculum product was a prominent feature in the implementation of the curriculum.
3. Staff development was utilized as the method for the management of the change process.
4. Curriculum development was structured to be a professional growth experience for the development group members.

Communication

1. The effective curriculum directors used effective communication to give parameters, state expectations and develop rapport with colleagues.
2. The ability and desire of the effective curriculum directors to be out with their colleagues while developing and implementing curriculum enhanced their effectiveness.

3. Communication with teachers, administrators, school board members and with the community, were all perceived as tasks given priority by the effective curriculum directors.
4. The public relations component, with the school and community, related to curriculum, was a priority with the effective curriculum directors.

The Consideration of Change

1. The effective curriculum directors encouraged the consideration of new ideas and developed a climate conducive to change in the district.
2. The management of the change process was a priority of the effective curriculum directors.

Selection and Acquisition of Instructional Materials

1. Instructional materials selection and acquisition were priorities of the effective curriculum directors.
2. Coordinating the selection of new textbooks for the district was a priority task.
3. The effective curriculum directors approved the requisitions for new textbooks and instructional materials for use in the district.
4. The effective curriculum directors prepared the section of the district budget related to the purchase of curriculum and instructional materials.

Summary

The major purpose of this study was to determine which tasks in curriculum development were given priority and which leader behaviors were exhibited by curriculum directors from mid-sized school districts, who have been designated as effective. An attempt was made to determine

how accurately the leader behaviors and tasks priorities were perceived by the members of the various reference groups, in relation to the perceptions of the effective curriculum directors.

Conclusions

Based upon the analysis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions were warranted. The conclusions of this study were based on the leader behaviors and task priorities exhibited by the participants selected for this study only.

1. The effective curriculum directors were a highly educated and professional groups, with solid foundations in current theories of curriculum and educational development.
2. There was no preference given to the authority position granted to the curriculum directors under study. This study did find that the effective curriculum directors under study utilized influence and persuasion, typical of staff authority, to lead curriculum development. The effective curriculum directors generally functioned as service providers rather than in a directive function.
3. The effective curriculum directors were able to achieve success by developing the human side of the organization and by developing curriculum through and with group members. They favored a participative leadership style.
4. The specific leader behavior exhibited by the effective curriculum directors varied with the group and situation. The effective curriculum directors utilized the situational leadership proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1982).
5. The effective curriculum directors were performing the tasks that have been described in the literature. The high priority tasks and

behaviors as exhibited by the effective curriculum directors found in this study were, at times, not mentioned in the recent research and related literature.

6. Specific tasks involved in the actual development of curriculum were given the highest priority by the effective curriculum directors. These tasks included directing subordinates, obtaining resources, and implementing systems that created and maintained support for the newly developed curriculum.
7. The evaluation and assessment of curriculum and the factors used to develop curriculum were priorities. Evaluation was used to assess the abilities and achievement of the student clientele, to assess the progress made in meeting the stated goals of the district and the curriculum program, and to assess the value of their developed curriculum products.
8. Communication was a vital component for success in curriculum development activities. The effective curriculum directors used two-way personal communication to gather and give clearly stated information regarding the curriculum to all school related groups.
9. The encouragement and acceptance of change by the effective curriculum directors created an environment that made for the expansion of the knowledge and abilities of the district staff. The management of the change process by the effective curriculum directors promoted the renewal of the school district without undue conflict.
10. The selection and acquisition of instructional materials and textbooks were viewed as necessary tasks by the effective curriculum directors. Priority was given to these tasks as a stated need rather than as a personal preference.

11. The professional growth opportunities and experiences for the school district staff were considered to be a vital component of the curriculum development process. In-service, staff development, and group development activities were provided for curriculum development group members.

12. Good communication and consistent behavior patterns, concerning philosophies, expectations, and goals were in evidence with the effective curriculum directors. The perceptual correlation was strongest concerning the exhibited task priorities. Direct interaction between groups increased the accuracy of perceptual correlation.

To a marked degree, the conduct of the curriculum directors' duties rest on their ability to influence and persuade rather than on the authoritative power of their position.

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